



Democratic State of the Union Response Center

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DEMOCRATS FIGHT FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES

While Republicans hand over billions in no-bid contracts to corporate interests, Democrats are fighting for a strong national security policy that protects the interests and safety of Americans. As Republicans continue to protect the wealthy corporate interests that put them in power, Democrats are putting the safety of American families first with strong steps to protect our homeland security.

Reinforce the front lines of our domestic defense. Currently, state and local budget crises are forcing cities to fire police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel even as more of them are needed to meet the increased demands of homeland security. Democrats want to strengthen the front lines of domestic defense by helping state and local governments hire more police, firefighters, and EMS professionals, and provide them with the tools and training they need. And Democrats want federal agencies to get information to state and local law enforcement and other officials who are the eyes and ears of our communities.

Train and equip our first responders. The vast majority of the nation's first responders don't have the protective gear, equipment, and training they need to respond to another large-scale terrorist attack, especially if it involves biological or chemical agents. Democrats want to make sure that our police, firefighters, and emergency medical technicians have the tools they need.

Making our Coast Guard stronger. The Coast Guard has been traditionally underfunded and short on personnel. Democrats want to upgrade the Coast Guard's fleet of ships and patrol aircraft in half the time of current plans.

Implementing security plans for ports. Ports are developing plans to provide the security necessary in the post-September 11th world, such as installing cameras, building fences, and posting guards. Due to lack of funding and commitment, many ports are struggling to get these changes in place, leaving them extremely vulnerable. We must fully secure our ports.

Inspecting cargo. Millions of cargo containers enter the U.S. every year. But currently, less than three percent of these containers are ever checked to determine their contents. Democrats want Customs inspectors permanently stationed at high-risk ports abroad and the installation of systems to track every container and ship entering U.S. ports.

Increase border enforcement. Hundreds of miles of our borders are inadequately monitored. Democrats are fighting for a terrorist "watch list," more Border Patrol agents, and State Department officials to stop terrorists from entering America in the first place.

Protect against a bioterrorist attack. Democrats want to ensure that hospitals can accommodate potentially large increases in patients and that they have the tools needed to respond to the effects of a potential attack, as well as to produce the medicines we need to counter potential threats.

Improve domestic nuclear security. Democrats want to conduct a top-to-bottom review of nuclear security concerns. We need to upgrade security at nuclear power plants to assure the highest levels of security and provide new protections against theft of materials that could be used in "dirty bombs."

Improve chemical security. Today there are over 3,000 chemical facilities where a toxic release could threaten more than 10,000 people. An incident at any of over 120 of those facilities could put more than one million people at risk. Democrats want to require chemical facilities to implement security improvement plans.